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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1136
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2274
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9296
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7551
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3711
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9859
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2646
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 0506
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0132
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7146
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000043

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO USTR FOR MICHAEL DELANEY

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SUBJECT: DELIVERY OF MALDIVES GSP DEMARCHE; ILO REQUEST
FUNDS

REF: SECSTATE 1911

¶1. (U) Per reftel, post delivered the demarche on GSP and labor rights to the highest levels of the Government of the Maldives (GOM). On December 29, Ambassador Butenis wrote Foreign Minister Shaheed on USG plans to review the Maldives labor rights in one year, emphasizing the need for the Maldives to make further improvements. The GOM should work to ensure that the legal framework of the Maldives affords all internationally recognized worker rights, including through the International Labor Organization (ILO) work plan and implementation of the new employment law. Ambassador Butenis also copied the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Human Resources, Youth and Sports (who cover labor issues). Post followed up with a visit by Charge Fowler and the economic chief on January 13. The Charge repeated the reftel points to Vice President Waheed, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Economic Development, and senior officials in the Ministries of Human Resources, Youth and Sports, Economic Development and Finance. The Charge also met with the Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and stressed that the Maldives must make further improvements in labor rights to continue to receive GSP benefits.

¶2. (SBU) The GOM has taken the demarche seriously, and they have already reached out to the ILO to implement the agreed work plan. Tine Staermose, regional director of the ILO office, has spoken to the Vice President of the Maldives, and they agreed to meet on January 18 to discuss implementation of the work plan. Officials of the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports assured the Charge that there would be solid results in 2010 in areas such as collective bargaining and labor tribunals.

¶3. (SBU) ILO Director Staermose emphasized how the GOM sincerely desires to improve their labor rights situation, and that the ILO could make substantial improvements in the Maldives, given its small size, for a small budget. Staermose said that with a grant of \$350,000 to \$500,000 USD the ILO could accomplish in one year what normally takes three years. The timing is right to seize this critical opportunity, with the Maldives an emerging democracy with a new government very interested in improving labor rights.

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